



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

This photograph comes from Judy Kilpatrick of Lake. It shows her grandson, Spc. Christopher Kilpatrick, left, of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 367th Maintenance Company and her nephew, Spc. Dustin Doolittle, of the 204th Air Defense Artillery. Here's what Judy wrote about the photo: "This picture was made only minutes after the 367th returned to Philadelphia the day before Thanksgiving after a year in Iraq. Chris had just stepped off the bus when his cousin, Dustin, grabbed him. The looks on their faces tell it all — home safe! Dustin spent a year in Washington, D.C.; he is now at the mobilization center at Camp Shelby. Chris and his wife, Nicole, had only been married two weeks before he left. He's readjusting to his job as assistant manager at Hardee's in Newton and plans to go into the ministry. He preached his first sermon in Iraq. We are proud of both of our soldiers."



COLLAGE BY WILL FRAZIER

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE ON TV

Will Frazier is a sophomore at Meridian High School. His parents are Tom and Susan Frazier and he has a sister, Ashlee. The family attends Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church. Will enjoys playing sports at MHS, especially baseball and football. Here's what he wrote about his artwork: "My project is a collage of pictures and military events that are happening mostly in Iraq. I feel these pictures are a good representation of many of the good things our soldiers are doing in Iraq that we never see on television. I shaped the pictures in the shape of the Pentagon and even added the open area of the Pentagon known as 'Ground Zero.' I feel like this is a great depiction of how we should view the men and women serving our country, fighting terrorism and protecting our freedom abroad."

'I promise to spend the rest of my life devoted to you'

Melinda Barksdale of Stonewall submitted this "Bragging Rights" story about her husband, Staff Sgt. Jared Barksdale of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion. Jared is deployed in Iraq, leaving behind a wife expecting a child and his civilian job at Bill Ethridge Lincoln-Mercury Isuzu.

By Melinda Barksdale
special to The Star

My husband, Jared Barksdale, always sees the best in everything and everyone. He has been in the Army National Guard for almost 18 years.

He joined when he was only 17 years old. He could not decide what to do with his life and needed some direction, so he joined the Army when he was in the 11th grade. He went on to college.

Before being deployed, Jared was working at Bill Ethridge and was involved in the Big Brother program.

My husband and I are expecting our third child in April and we are hoping that he will be home for the special event. But, he has not complained once about having to go do something as profound as serving his country.

This is not the first time Jared has been overseas. He served in Desert Storm from 1990-1991, and is now stationed in Iraq.

I know that it has to be scary for him to leave his family, but not once has he let on that it bothers him. I know that he is just trying to be strong for his family. He always tells me that everything is OK, that it will all work out for the best, that everything happens for a reason, and now was his time to take his turn on the battlefield. I admire him for having such courage and strength in such a situation.

I still get a little apprehensive about the whole thing. It is hard to go from being just Mom to being Mom, Dad and everything in between. I can only imagine how hard it is for single parents to manage day-to-day activities by themselves. I have a newfound respect for anyone who has to do all of this alone.

I am lucky because I have my mother-in-law and father-in-law, who help me out a lot. If it were not for them, it would be even harder for me to handle.

As for the saying, "You don't



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OVERSEAS AGAIN

Melinda Barksdale says it's hard to be Mom, Dad and everything in between while her husband, Jared, is deployed in Iraq. "I can only imagine how hard it is for single parents to manage day-to-day activities by themselves," she said. "I have a newfound respect for anyone who has to do all of this alone."

A MESSAGE FROM MOM

Jared Barksdale's mother, Dixie Harper, also wanted to brag on her son: "My son is the most loyal person I know. He is the most faithful husband, father, son, brother, uncle and friend anyone could ever hope to have. It was hard to let him join the Army National Guard at 17, but he wanted it badly. He has taken pride in his Army career. His experiences in Desert Storm gave him a new perspective on life. Jared's children, Emory, Julie and J.J., miss him terribly. We know he will return to us and the community. We will all be better people because of Jared's example."

know what you've got until it's gone," it is very true.

I never realized that a small task, such as giving the kids a bath, or just spending time with them really matters, but it does. I miss the simple things that are often taken for granted, such as being able to call my husband at any time, going to lunch, or even sitting on our couch talking.

Whenever I got down, he was always there to make me feel better. He never com-

plained about what was being served for dinner or if the kids left toys in the middle of the floor. He is one terrific father and an even better husband and I will miss him.

However, Jared will never be too far away because he is always in my heart and in my prayers. Jared, if you get to read this, I promise to spend the rest of my life devoted to you and only you. You are truly a godsend.



See Alexandria Riess' artwork, entitled ...

"Message of Hope"

in the
Community
section.